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Vice and Race: Segregation in Kansas Cattle Towns

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In Kansas cattle towns of the 1870s and 1880s, white citizens segregated business and residential districts based on morality, economic status, and race. The towns consistently contained so-called vice industries in distinct areas. Whites tolerated the existence of vice industries in their towns for economic reasons that served the transient cowboy population. While African Americans certainly faced racial discrimination, race-based segregation varied among the towns according to perceived moral and economic conditions. The limited racial integration in some Kansas cattle towns suggests that these new western communities accepted economic competition by African Americans. Notably, such selective integration in cattle towns occurred at a time when economically motivated lynchings were common in the South.[1] This paper first explains how residents segregated the vice industry from the more reputable areas of towns and the role that cowboys played in the existence of the industry. Next, I differentiate among the expressions of racial discrimination that existed in the towns to show the limits of racial segregation. Women who worked as prostitutes played a major role in the vice industry and suffered the most under the treatment of white "moralists." I argue that moralists usually condemned the practice of prostitution but not necessarily the sex workers. Indeed, moralists assumed a protective position when women were injured by male clients. By exploring the motives of white moralists in segregating vice industries, their treatment of the female workforce, and their treatment of African Americans, generally, I maintain that economic concerns were paramount. Moral concerns and racism played lesser roles in this region than in

[1] Bederman explains the reasons for lynchings in the United States and how Ida B. Wells wrote about lynchings to make the American public more aware of lynchings and the economic motivations for such actions. Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 54.

more developed areas in the East because the towns needed revenue from the vice industry, black businesses, black cowboys, and sex workers.[2]

Vice is considered to be drinking, smoking, sexual misbehavior, taking drugs, gambling, and swearing.[3] Establishments in cattle towns such as saloons, gambling halls, and brothels promoted these activities. In Victorian society, people held the belief that community life should be well-ordered and regulated.[4] Vice industries directly opposed these values. Therefore after citizens became permanently established in cattle towns, the citizens usually segregated the industries to a certain area of town. Rivers and railroad tracks physically separated vice sections from the rest of the towns, and residents called the districts something different than the town name. Although formal segregation of these industries did not exist in the 1870s and 1880s, this segregation represents an early form of zoning. The citizens of the cattle towns concerned about making their towns "moral" defined the differences between respectability and unrespectability.

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[2] Richard White shows that western, white communities that attempted to uphold moral values of ten linked immorality with minorities. However, minorities fought back against such attacks. A western social order emerged that differed from that in the East because of the presence of many different groups of people. While moral concerns and race were important to whites in western communities, those communities also had different kinds of economies than those in the East. White, *It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 321, 307, 299, 270. Historians have examined cattle towns, the treatment of African Americans, and the treatment of women working as prostitutes in these towns. Examining these sources provides explanations for the roles of racial toleration and the existence of prostitution in cattle towns. Robert Dykstra and Harry Drago examined the relations of people living in Kansas cattle towns, the influence of the vice industry, and how citizens controlled racial segregation and violence. Dykstra, *Cattle Towns,* (New York: Knopf, 1968) and Drago, *Wild, Wooly, and Wicked: The History of the Kansas CowTowns and the Texas Cattle Trade* (New York: C.N. Potter, 1960). Quintard Taylor's scholarship provides analysis on how the Kansas cattle towns treated African Americans, in that the cattle towns exhibited some aspects of racial toleration in respect to Black cowboys because they relied on the cattle industry for their economy. Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier: African Americans in the American West, 1528-1990* (New York : Norton, 1998), 160. Nell Painter examined the influx of African Americans from the South into Kansas, why they came, why they stayed, the communities that they formed, and why Kansans exhibited some forms of racial toleration. Painter, *Exodusters: Black Migration to Kansas After Reconstruction; With a New Introduction (*New York : Norton, 1992, c1986). Jan MacKell, Anne Butler and Michael Rutter provided excellent analysis on the role of prostitution in cattle towns, racial segregation of prostitutes, and the industry in which the women worked. MacKell. *Red Light Women of the Rocky Mountains* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009), Butler. *Daughters of Joy, Sisters of Misery: Prostitutes in the American West, 1865-90* (Urbana : University of Illinois Press, 1985), and Rutter. *Upstairs Girls: Prostitution in the American West* (Helena, MT: Farcountry Press, 2005).

[3] John C. Burnham, *Bad Habits: Drinking, Smoking, Taking Drugs, Gambling, Sexual Misbehavior, and Swearing in American History* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 2.

[4] William J. Novak, *The People's Welfare: Law and Regulation in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 154.

Citizens defined unrespectable individuals as those who engaged in bad habits that led to bad character. These bad habits also created disorder in the cattle towns.[5] The people in cattle towns concerned about morality held a general concern for order, ethics, good manners, respectable habits, and standards of decency. People labeled vice businesses that endangered this order as disorderly and threatened those businesses with closure.[6]

The formation of cattle towns such as Abilene, Wichita, and Dodge City in Kansas created conditions in which the moral citizens of the towns depended on the economic advantages of industries of vice. The cowboys who resided in these towns for three to six months out of the year enjoyed spending their earnings at establishments such as gambling halls, saloons, dance halls, and houses of ill repute. Town citizens recognized that if they did not allow these establishments in their towns, cattle traders would choose another town to move their business. Citizens often saw cowboys as the instigators of problems in the vice community. They viewed cowboys as wild, untamed, uncivilized, and the reason that the rest of the United States believed that cattle towns were some of the worst and most dangerous places on Earth.

Cattle traders selected Abilene in 1867 as a good location for the cattle trade, and as the shipping point for sending cattle to the East.[7] Abilene would be the first of the Kansas towns to be considered a "cattle town." Joseph McCoy was a major proprietor in the cattle industry, and lived in Abilene and other cattle towns. He wrote a recollection of the cattle trade in the West and provides an interesting examination of cowboys and the vice industries in Abilene. McCoy claimed, "Few occupations were more cheerful, lively, and pleasant than that of the cowboy," but that they also "Squander tens, fifties, and hundreds for gratification of their appetites and

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[5] Burnham, *Bad Habits,* 12, 6.

[6] Novak, *People's Welfare,* 149, 159.

[7] Joseph C. G. McCoy. *Historic Sketches of the Cattle Trade of the West and Southwest* (Kansas City, Missouri: Ramsey, Millett & Hudson, 1874), Ch.3.

passions."[8] Others thought of cowboys as hard workers who were happy with their career choice. However, they also wished to indulge in drinking, gambling, and prostitutes. McCoy also described cowboys as, "Half-civilized and loved whisky like a barbarous Indian."[9] In this statement, McCoy demonstrated not only the common belief that all cowboys loved to drink whisky and that it damaged their moral character, but he also showed the racist attitudes of frontiersmen in connecting cowboys to negatively stereotyped Indians within the practice of drinking whisky. In order to provide for the happiness of these cowboys who brought business to Abilene, the town had to be willing to provide the amusements that the cowboys wished to spend their paychecks on.

J.B Edwards also wrote a recollection of the early years of the cattle trade in Abilene. He provides analysis of Abilene in the 1870s, and how the vice industries transformed the town. Edwards described Abilene as "wild and wooly." He said that the trade brought all kinds of business to Abilene to suit the wants of drovers, buyers, and cowboys, and that people filled the streets from morning until night, and from night until morning during the summer.[10] Cowboys occupied Abilene during the summer, and the town grew extensively during this season. Vice industries also increased, and when the cowboys left for the winter, so did many of those bad reputed businesses.

A Red Light District emerged by 1868 in Abilene, even though the cattle trade did not officially begin until 1871. In July of 1868, the Topeka Commonwealth wrote, "At this writing, Hell is now in session in Abilene."[11] Saloons and brothels stayed open all day and night. In the early 1870s the Red Light District existed north of the town, but Mayor Joseph McCoy later

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[8] McCoy, *Historic Sketches,* Ch. 6, 3.
[9] McCoy, *Historic Sketches,* Ch. 8.
[10] J.B. Edwards. *Early Days in Abilene.* The Abilene Daily Chronicle (Abilene, Kansas, 1896), 2.
[11] Drago, *Wild, Wooly, and Wicked,* 47.

moved the district east. Brothels constituted most of those businesses moved. Citizens concerned themselves more with prostitutes than gambling halls and saloons. The town segregated the tract of land set aside for brothels, or the Red Light District, from the rest of the town.[12] After McCoy moved the district, it became known as McCoy's Addition or Devil's Half-Acre.[13] The name and distance of the district from the town separated people considered immoral in the district from the upstanding citizens of the town.

By 1874, Wichita was the primary cattle town in Kansas. The town also placed fines on saloons, and other vices in the city. By 1877, Wichita faced limited problems with crime because the town enacted a law that forbade the carrying of firearms.[14] While Wichita provided the industries that attracted cowboys, the town also placed limits and fines on those industries. The permanent population of Wichita did not tolerate the rowdiness of cowboys in their town, and not only did they see the decline of crime in 1877, but also the decline of the cattle industry. Wichita also faced misrepresentations and falsehoods that described their town as uncivilized. A *Topeka Commonwealth* story described Wichita as a place of murder, riot, and full of Ku Klux Klan members. The *Wichita Eagle* responded by stating that no murders had occurred in Wichita and that the city remained orderly and civilized. The *Eagle* stated that in Wichita people drank less whiskey, started fewer brawls, gambled less, and that fewer lewd women lived in Wichita than Topeka.[15] As with other cattle towns, Wichita fought against the misrepresentations of cattle towns as places where people did not follow the law. However, the defense of Wichita is best understood in terms of the permanent settlement in the town, and not necessarily by the conduct of the cowboys.

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[12] Dykstra, *Cattle Towns,* 260.

[13] Drago, *Wild, Wooly, and Wicked,* 32.

[14] H. Craig Miner. *Wichita: The Early Years, 1865-80* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), 112, 119, 132.

[15] Editorial, *Wichita City Eagle,* April 26, 1872.

Wichita citizens positioned Delano, the district of saloons, dance halls, and brothels, west of the town and across the river.[16] As in other cattle towns, residents separated Delano from the rest of the town by a barrier, the river. The Victorian society in Wichita grew in the 1870's and focused on social issues and reform. Delano naturally became the subject of numerous discussions, and the *Wichita City Eagle* newspaper took opportunities to describe Delano to readers. In October of 1873, the editor wrote that a terrible fight took place in one of the dance houses on the west side of the river, in Delano. During the fight, two owners of different dance halls, Rowdy Joe and Red, shot each other. One of the men shot a dance hall girl named Annie Franklin in the abdomen, and the *Eagle* wrote that she would probably not live. Other than describing the actions that took place, the editor found no further comment necessary.[17] According to the editor, commenting on anything other than the events that took place in Delano was not necessary. The "upstanding" citizens of Wichita who read his paper already knew what type of people had gotten into the fight, and believed that the cause came down to bad morals.

Although "upstanding" citizens viewed Delano as a detriment to society, they also regarded it in a comic light. In April of 1872, the editor of the *Eagle* wrote that, "Delano is improving very rapidly and business is said to be very lively over there."[18] Delano expanded in 1872 due to the cattle industry boom, but it is doubtful that the editor was happy with the expansion. More likely he decided to draw the attention of his readers to Delano's expansion and the thriving business of vice. In similar fashion, the editor wrote in January of 1873 that the Presbyterian Society wanted to build a church to "Entice the thoughtless away from the blazoned and glittering haunts of vice and infamy so thickly set in a "fast" town like ours." People in the

[16] Drago, *Wild, Wooly, and Wicked,* 182.
[17] Editorial, *Wichita City Eagle,* October 30, 1873.
[18] Editorial, *Wichita City Eagle,* April 12, 1872.

east calling Kansans "Kansas Sinners" caused the editor to become upset."[19] Clearly, the editor and the Presbyterian Society tried to curtail the activities in Delano and to steer the followers of the vice industries into a new lifestyle.

Established as a cowtown in 1875, Dodge City experienced its most profitable years in the cattle trade between 1878 and 1879.[20] The rest of the country recognized Dodge City for lawlessness and as the edge of the frontier. However, Dodge City became infamous when the cattle trade arrived. Robert Wright wrote a lengthy memoir about Dodge City. He examined the role of violence, vice industries, and race. Wright described Dodge City as,

> "Beautiful Bibulous Babylon of the Frontier. Her principal business is polygamy…her code of morals is honor of thieves, and decency she knows not. Her virtue is prostitution and her beverage is whiskey. She is a merry town and the only visible support of a great many of her citizens is jocularity. The town is full of prostitutes and every other place is a brothel."[21]

Although Wright seemed to describe the worst kind of attributes of his town, he also defended the town in stating that not everything written about wicked Dodge was true, and that not only bad men came to Dodge City, but that good men came to. He said that although the town had characteristics that kept it from being labeled moral, it did have a church, courthouse, and jail.[22] Wright knew that wicked elements existed in Dodge City, but he believed that writers romanticized many incidents in the town to make the city appear worse. In comparison to other

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[19] Editorial, *Wichita City Eagle,* January 2, 1873.
[20] Drago, *Wild, Wooly & Wicked,* 277-278.
[21] Drago, *Wild, Wooly & Wicked,* 280.
[22] Robert M. Wright. *Dodge City: The Cowboy Capital and the Great Southwest in the Days of the Wild Indian, the Buffalo, the Cowboy, Dance Halls, Gambling Halls, and Bad Men* (Wichita, Kansas: Wichita Eagle Press), 1913, 139-140.

cattle towns, Dodge City seemed very similar. The city boasted the same vice establishments for the benefit of cowboys so that Dodge City could make a profit from the cattle industry.

Dodge City boasted eight saloons in 1878 and thirteen saloons by 1882.[23] Residents confined saloons, dance halls, and brothels to the south part of Dodge City, or South Side.[24] Citizens also segregated the dance halls; similar to the separation of vice districts from the respectable part of town. For a brief time, Dodge City hosted three dance halls, but usually the residents only allowed two in the town. White females staffed one of these halls and white males provided the business. Black females staffed the other dance hall and both white and black males acted as customers.[25] Businesses that included white females allowed only white men as customers, but those that hired black females, allowed black or white men as customers. Establishments allowed both races in their doors, but often continued to confine white women in a white Victorian society, even if those women were dance hall girls or prostitutes.

As the last cattle town, many people saw Dodge City as the wildest due to the amount of drinking and other vice activities. Gun fighting also played a role in the stereotype, but exaggeration created more anxiety concerning the town than actual fighting and killing. Dodge City residents did not consider the moral atmosphere very different than the other cattle towns, but its reputation often gave outsiders a far more deplorable tone toward the city. In January of 1878, the Washington D.C. Evening Star wrote that, "There is no hopeful sign of moral improvement," referring to Dodge City.[26] Perhaps embracement of alcohol and other vices by Dodge City citizens also gave the town a bad reputation. Although Dodge City did separate its vice district from the rest of the city, for at least a number of years it appears that most citizens

[23] Dykstra, *Cattle Towns,* 101.
[24] Drago, *Wild, Wooly, and Wicked,* 288.
[25] Dykstra, *Cattle Towns,* 106.
[26] Wright, *Dodge City,* 149.

did not concern themselves with moral improvement and actually supported vice. Robert Wright wrote that, "The man who did not drink in some degree was regarded as something of a freak, and as lacking the social spirit."[27] Wright, who lived in Dodge City for a number of years, understood that until Kansas prohibition in 1880, residents saw alcohol drinking as a natural activity. Prohibition in Kansas mirrored the decline of the cattle industry in towns. As a permanent citizenry settled in Kansas cattle towns, the proponents of a moral society sought to prohibit the consumption of alcohol in Kansas.

The cattle towns of Ellsworth and Newton also sought to separate people seen as immoral from the rest of the town. Ellsworth captured the cattle trade in 1873, and in that year, ten saloons operated in the town. [28] Half of a mile east of Ellsworth stood an area known as Nauch-ville, or the bottom. This district not only contained the vice industries of saloons and prostitution, but the town also confined racial groups to this place.[29] Most of the other towns did not appear to distinctly separate racial groups into the vice district. However, because of the similar discrimination often associated with non-white racial groups and people who worked in the vice industries, this segregation in not surprising. Newton operated as a popular cattle town in the same years as Abilene and Ellsworth. Historians wrote that because Newton did not have defined laws, the town attracted people not tolerated in Abilene and Ellsworth.[30] J. B. Edwards, who lived in Abilene in 1871, wrote that Newton seemed much worse than Abilene, and that violence killed eleven people in one night, and more shortly after.[31] In Newton, two saloons sold

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[27] Wright, *Dodge City,* 223.

[28] Dykstra, *Cattle Towns,* 101.

[29] Floyd Benjamin Streeter. *Prairie Trails & Cow towns: The Opening of the Old West* (New York: Devin Adair Co., 1963), 96.

[30] Drago, *Wild, Wooly, and Wicked,* 157.

[31] Edwards, *Abilene,* 11.

liquor and eight houses provided gambling.[32] Next to these buildings, White, Mexican, and Mulatto prostitutes lived in cribs.[33] The location of this district of saloons, gambling houses, and cribs was the corner of town, just south of the railroad track. Similar to other cattle towns, residents separated the district, labeled as Hide Park, from the center of town.[34]

Caldwell appears to be the exception to cattle towns that separated their vice districts from the respectable areas of towns. Located on the border between Kansas and Indian Territory, Caldwell was most active in the cattle trade from 1879-1883.[35] In Caldwell, the law allowed prostitutes in saloons (other towns did not), and allowed them to walk through the town with cowboys.[36] The citizens of Caldwell did not establish a system of law early, and this allowed vice to run rampant compared to other cattle towns.

Gambling houses, saloons, dance halls, and prostitutes offered cowboys an exciting lifestyle, but one that also provided elements for bad behavior and reputations. The reputations of the cowboys then shifted to represent those of the cattle towns. The lifestyles that moralists accepted in these towns because of the cattle industry provided an environment which caused certain groups of people to suffer discrimination, and in which a war concerning morality took place.

Racism and discrimination existed in the cattle towns, but citizens also accepted some racial toleration. Kansas, as a northern state, exhibited more racial toleration than southern states, but the presence of African American cowboys also influenced the citizens in the cattle towns. These cowboys spent their money in saloons, restaurants, hotels, and brothels. White and Black

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[32] Streeter, *Cow Towns,* 128.
[33] Drago, *Wild, Wooly, and Wicked,* 158.
[34] Streeter, *Cow Towns,* 128.
[35] Drago, *Wild, Wooly, and Wicked,* 249, 266.
[36] Drago, *Wild, Wooly, and Wicked,* 255.

drovers often shared rooms and tables at saloons and restaurants.[37] Therefore, because of economic reasons, African Americans suffered less discrimination than in other places, such as the East and the South in the 1870s and 1880s. Kansans treated African Americans and other minorities differently than whites, but to a lesser degree in comparison. Topeka's *Colored Citizen* newspaper gives some insight into relations between African Americans and whites. In a March 1879 article, the editor wrote that a Black man in Kansas City decided to marry a White girl. The couple lived in Missouri, so they went to Wyandotte, Kansas to get married.[38] This brief news clip explains that Kansans allowed miscegenation. While numerous instances exist in which whites discriminated against African Americans, Kansas did hold many opportunities for African Americans, including the right to marry a different race. Laws banning marriages between Whites and Blacks did not extend to the West until late in the 19th century. In 1879, some western states, including Kansas, still allowed marriages between Whites and Blacks. The eventual spread of the outlawing of miscegenation in the West shows how the racial superiority framework present in the North and the South spread to the West as western towns developed a stable population concerned with racial and moral values similar to those in the North and the South.[39]

An August 1878 article in the *Colored Citizen* shows examples of cooperation between African Americans and whites. This editorial said that a "white scoundrel" attempted an outrage on an African American girl outside of Independence. Some other white boys out hunting pointed their guns at the scoundrel and marched him to Independence. The editor hoped that the

[37] Taylor, *Racial Frontier,* 160.
[38] Editorial, *Colored Citizen,* March 8, 1879.
[39] Peggy Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally: Miscegenation Law and the Making of Race in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 2.

scoundrel would be punished to the fullest extent of the law.[40] This editorial depicted the cooperation of races working together to uphold values that protected women. The hunting boys cared more about the fact that the individual was a woman than the color of her skin. The boys practiced Victorian morals over racism. Just as Kansans allowed miscegenation until 1878, they also expected respect from white males towards black females according to moral standards.

With the emergence of cattle towns in Kansas, other groups of African Americans lived in cattle towns besides cowboys. Many families and businessmen also moved to Kansas cattle towns in hopes of a better life than in the South. Whites integrated these African Americans into the larger community at times and segregated them at others. African Americans, in turn, developed their own organizations and ideas about Victorian morals.

Families of African American and Mexican cowboys were the first minorities to settle in cattle towns. These families often established businesses of their own in the towns.[41] While some historians believe that African Americans experienced less segregation and discrimination in cattle towns than elsewhere, other historians explain that African Americans in cattle towns still experienced segregation and discrimination. Robert Hine wrote that African Americans suffered victimization because of the impossibility in a cattle town for a white man to be convicted or prosecuted for a crime against an African American.[42] In cattle towns, both segregation and integration, and discrimination and cooperation took place. Moore wrote that African Americans mixed freely with whites in the streets and that they could enter a saloon together, but that the bar owners separated the bar itself in half. White men occupied one half of the bar and African

[40] Editorial, *Colored Citizen,* August, 16, 1878.
[41] Miner, *Wichita,* 100.
[42] Robert V. Hine and Edwin Bingham. *The American Frontier: Readings and Documents* (Boston : Little, Brown, 1972), 227.

Americans used the other half. However, towns did not segregate black-owned businesses.[43] These divisions relate back to the racial toleration sometimes accepted because of the African Americans in the cattle industry. The cattle towns tried to cooperate with the cattle industry as best as they could, and this included at least partial racial integration. While these African American cowboys endured less segregation because of their occupation, they still suffered from more segregation than their white counterparts. Historians determined that cattle towns segregated less in their early days, and after they became more established, they practiced more segregation. When a smaller community of African Americans grew larger in a cattle town, the residents enforced more segregation. In 1870, Wichita had a small African American community integrated into the rest of society. However, as population in the town rose, residents segregated African Americans.[44]

The influx of African Americans to Kansas came between 1870 and 1880, with a large portion of African Americans arriving in Kansas in 1879. Painter explained that better opportunities for economic and political freedom attracted them. These African Americans, known as Exodusters, came from the South to start new lives on the prairie and in the frontier towns of Kansas. The Kansas history of John Brown and Free Soilers created an image for African Americans that Kansas would welcome them. In 1879 alone, six thousand African Americans from Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas migrated to Kansas. Although many of these African Americans found it hard to find steady work in Kansas, the state provided a better home for them than the South.[45] An article written in the *Colored Citizen* influenced many African Americans to come to Kansas in 1879. The article entitled, "Come West," written by African Americans, encouraged those in the South to move to Kansas. They described the soil, climate,

[43] Moore, *Cowboys and Cattlemen,* 176.
[44] Taylor, *Racial Frontier,* 217.
[45] Painter. *Exodusters,* 158-159, 184, 258.

and people of Kansas as wonderful. African Americans in Kansas considered Kansas whites to be friendly, holding no ill-feelings towards newcomers, and welcoming of people with industrious habits. The article said that Kansas had room for two million of these types of people who needed to escape cruelty and deviltry in the South.[46] The article depicted Kansans as welcoming of African Americans and willing to promote a community of unity and integration. Some African Americans encountered these characteristics when they came to Kansas, while others found hardship and discrimination.

A large population of African Americans settled in Topeka, and although Topeka was not a cattle town, African Americans experienced similar situations. In 1870, Topeka had a Black population of 8 percent, and by 1880 that population had increased to 23 percent of the total population. As Black business districts expanded, a professional class developed. With these structures in place, Topeka African Americans formed social organizations, including religious and cultural societies.[47] These organizations often focused on the practice of Victorian morals among the African American society. An editorial in the *Colored Citizen* even called for the separation of the moral and immoral within the African American race. The authors said that loose characters, male and female, should be separated from the rest of the race because good people should not associate with people such as loafers, thieves, bums, harlots, streetwalkers, and prostitutes.[48] While at the same time that whites segregated African Americans away from white society, both whites and African Americans removed immoral people from the ranks of their societies.

The best way to understand the depiction of African Americans in cattle towns is to examine newspaper articles, and the writing of Wright concerning Dodge City. These examples

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[46] Editorial, "Come West", *Colored Citizen*, November 30, 1878.
[47] Taylor, *Racial Frontier,* 212-213.
[48] Editorial, "Dividing Line", *Colored Citizen,* June 14, 1878.

show not only the existence of racism in the towns, but also the kinds of altercations that African Americans faced. Newspapers often showed little sympathy for African Americans, or did not fully address a story because of the race of those involved. When a train ran over a Black porter in Wichita, the newspaper writer stated the probable cause as drunkenness. The newspaper did not need further investigation. After an unknown murderer killed a Mexican cook, the same Wichita newspaper did not even bother to find out the cooks name.[49] If these incidents had involved white men, the stories would have included many more details.

Whites discriminated against African Americans in cattle towns simply in the way that they referred to African Americans in newspapers. In the *Abilene Chronicle,* in an article entitled "How Sambo Voted in Abilene," the writer described one African American as a "darkey" and a "cuss" for voting Democratic instead of Republican. The author then stated that perhaps the man needed to go to school.[50] During this period of Reconstruction in 1870, African Americans primarily voted for the Republican Party because it pushed more for rights of African Americans than the Democratic Party. This article demonstrates the treatment and discussion of African Americans in the local media when the white populace did not approve of actions done by African Americans. In comparison of attitudes, when Wright discussed the wonderful people of Dodge City, he said, "But with all its wildness, Dodge could then, as it does yet, boast of some of the best, freest, and whitest boys in the country."[51] Wright believed that only white boys could be the best examples of men in Dodge City. Even when whites allowed integration in some of the cattle towns, they still thought of themselves in a different class than other races.

Newspapers and recollections, such as Wrights, most commonly referred to African Americans and Mexicans in terms of violence. One of the only references to Mexicans in the

[49] Miner, *Wichita,* 101-102.
[50] Editorial, "How Sambo Voted in Abilene", *Abilene Chronicle,* November 10, 1870.
[51] Wright, *Dodge City,* 146.

Wichita Eagle describes an argument over cooking between a cook of a cattleman and a man known only as a Mexican. The Mexican shot the cook through the heart, and then left town.[52] What is interesting about this article is that since the cook is not listed as Black or Mexican, it can be assumed that he is white. In most cases, authorities analyzed the murder of a white man more fully than concluding that the "murderer just left town". Perhaps the cook was not a very popular or likeable man.

In another *Eagle* editorial, the attempt to murder an African American that the editors deemed as a good citizen, received a lot of attention in the newspaper. Charley Sanders, an African American, and Ramsey, a white man, argued one evening. A few days later, Ramsey walked up to Sanders and shot him twice. Ramsey then rode out of town with the protection of other men from Texas, presumably all men of the cattle trade. The editors described Sanders as well-known in the city, a family man, sober, and hardworking. The newspaper also used the incident as an example as to why the ordinance on the no carrying of weapons in town should be enforced.[53] In a later article, the editors reported Sanders' death from his wounds as one of the darkest tragedies in Wichita. The writers said that they tried to tell the truth of what happened between Sanders and Ramsey when townspeople criticized their account of the story.[54] The sympathy that Sanders received from the editors of the *Eagle* is surprising in relation to how whites usually treated African Americans in the cattle town newspapers. However, because Sanders represented Victorian ideals and appeared to be a very moral man, he received more sympathy than African Americans who died in engagements that involved vice. The editors of the *Eagle* put the morality of the man before the color of his skin.

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[52] Editorial, *Wichita City Eagle,* August 8, 1872.

[53] Editorial, "A Fateful and Disgraceful Affair: An Attempt to Murder a Colored Man." *Wichita City Eagle,* May 28, 1874.

[54] Editorial, *Wichita City Eagle,* June 4, 1874.

In a Dodge City article in 1883, the murder of two African Americans led the editors to write, "If the terrible tragedy will be the means of ridding the town of the disreputable place, there can some good come out of evil."[55] The editors felt that the town needed to close down the dance hall in which the murders took place. No witnesses saw the murders of the two men in the dance hall. The writers also wrote that the townspeople did not necessarily look at the murders in horror, as they expected this kind of behavior in the vice establishments.[56] To many townspeople, the tragedy of the two men's deaths was not the loss of lives, but that yet another violent act occurred in a vice establishment that by 1883, many Dodge City residents wanted to close down.

Robert Wright also treated the murder of the first man killed in Dodge City, an African American, in the same detached manner. He depicted little outrage to the actual murder after explaining the killing of the man. Wright described Tex, the African American as "a little fresh, but inoffensive." Tex had been standing on a platform in front of a house when some kind of excitement happened in the street. No one knew who fired the shot that killed Tex, until a gambler named Denver bragged about it years later. Wright stated that residents did not agree on whether or not Tex provoked Denver into killing him.[57] The murder of Tex appeared to be labeled as an accident, and the town conducted little investigation to figure out who murdered the African American.

Whites also segregated African Americans in cattle towns through the use of entertainment and amusement. Minstrelsy, introduced in the 1830's, is the performance of African American song and dance by white actors under blackface masks of burnt cork. By the mid-nineteenth century, minstrelsy was the most popular form of entertainment in the country.

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[55] Editorial, "Two Colored Men Killed," *Dodge City Times,* October 11, 1883.
[56] Editorial, "Two Colored Men Killed," *Dodge City Times,* October 11, 1883.
[57] Wright, *Dodge City,* 166.

The performances portrayed African Americans as different and inferior, and because of the popularity of such shows, whites conducted the performances in the Kansas cattle towns for amusement.[58] Wright gave an example of minstrelsy performance in Dodge City. He wrote that as a group of men played charades in Dodge City, a sergeant delivered a "darkey" speech and dressed up in black face for the speech. However, the liquid that the sergeant used dried and he could not get it off for a while.[59] The fact that the sergeant had to wear the face of an African American for a time amused the men even more than the speech itself. Whites in Dodge City not only saw African Americans as a source of amusement, but also as a source of ridicule. Minstrelsy was not only a popular form of amusement in cities in the North and South, but also in the cattle towns of the West as these towns became part of the circuit for railroad-traveling musicians.

In a *Times* article in May of 1877, Wright described the prizefighting game of lap-jacket. The game came from Africa and involved the engagement of two African Americans. White spectators took bets on which player would win. The game was not really a game at all, but consisted of the two men whipping each other with bull whips to see who would give up first.[60] In this case, whites once again disrespected African Americans and saw them as another source of amusement and entertainment.

Kansas cattle towns exhibited a mixture of integration and segregation of African Americans in their societies. In the early years of cattle towns, African Americans appear to be more accepted for economic reasons, and later they are at times acknowledged for individual moral accomplishments. While "moral" citizens often discriminated against African Americans,

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[58] Karl Hagstrom Miller, *Segregating Sound: Inventing Folk and Pop Music in the Age of Jim Crow* (Durham: University of Duke Press, 2010), 4.

[59] Wright, *Dodge City,* 214.

[60] Wright, *Dodge City,* 239.

many examples suggest that the morality of citizens concerned some cattle town residents more than race.

Prostitutes constituted the first element of vice in a cattle town. Both white and black women became prostitutes for a variety of reasons. The respectable citizens of the towns ostracized these women, who faced violence on a daily basis. Towns forced prostitutes to pay fines which kept the women within the prostitution business. Women sex-workers were the victims of gunfights and stabbings, and those who described themselves as the moral residents of the cattle towns considered these women's lives of little value.

At the turn of the 20th century, Ruth Rosen wrote *The Lost Sisterhood,* in which she conducted a survey about how women came to be prostitutes. She found that most women entered the industry for one or more of the following reasons: bad home conditions, betrayal, deception, seduction, death/desertion by husband, choice, bad friends, more money, pleasure, alcohol and drugs, and economic necessity.[61] Most women entered the profession because they felt that they had no other choice, and once they became a prostitute, they found it hard to obtain any other kind of lifestyle. MacKell concluded that historians estimated 50,000 prostitutes worked in the West in the latter part of the 19th century. The places that these women worked varied from high-class bordellos and parlor houses to shacks called cribs to streetwalking. The prostitution business was hierarchical, with women often starting at the top and descending in the business with age. Although a few women became successful as madams and owners of brothels, most women suffered from violence, poverty, alcoholism, disease, and drugs. Many prostitutes also attempted or committed suicide.[62] While historians tried to estimate the number of women who worked as prostitutes in the West, the exact number can never be known. In many

[61] MacKell. *Red Light Women*, 4.
[62] White, *Misfortune,* 304-305.

censuses', officials listed women working as prostitutes under "personal-service providers." Therefore in the 1878 Dodge City census, officials only listed seven women as prostitutes, when probably between forty-five and fifty lived in the city.[63] "Moral" citizens tried to hide the number of women working as prostitutes in the cattle towns as another way attempt to shield vice from the community and their image within the national vision.

Prostitutes appeared in cattle towns around June in "cat wagons," and they left in the fall.[64] They stayed in cattle towns during the same months as cowboys because those men served as the women's main source of income. The citizens of the towns also did not want the women who worked as prostitutes in the town, and usually only allowed their presence to satisfy the needs of the cattle industry. However, the towns forced prostitutes and brothel owners to pay fines and fees, and the towns did not mind collecting that source of income.[65] In a grand jury investigation conducted in Wichita in 1887, almost 300 prostitutes explained how those fines and fees prevented them from accumulating any profit and being able to move out of the business. The women stated that they did not keep a lot of the money that they charged customers, because they paid so much to brothel owners, hotels, and boardinghouses who rented to prostitutes. Owners of hotels and boardinghouses rented rooms to customers considered moral citizens for three to five dollars a week. Prostitutes paid fourteen dollars a week to rent their rooms. Therefore, Butler determined that even though women who worked as prostitutes might charge a large sum for their services, most of the money that they made went right back into a system that exploited them.[66]

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[63] C. Robert Haywood. *Victorian West: Class and Culture in Kansas Cattle Towns* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1991), 30-31, 37.

[64] MacKell, *Red Light Women,* 22.

[65] MacKell, *Red Light Women,* 24.

[66] Butler. *Daughters of Joy*, 59-60.

After white prostitutes, African American prostitutes formed the second largest group of prostitutes in the West and cattle towns. Both white and black men visited African American brothels. Some brothels worked white and black prostitutes together, and in these rare cases, owners only allowed white men to visit the establishments. The numbers of African American prostitutes increased in the West dramatically increased after the Civil War, and by 1880, African Americans constituted 35-40 percent of prostitutes in Austin, Texas.[67] This percentage of African American prostitutes also represented the number of women working as prostitutes in Kansas. After the war, the state experienced a higher influx of African Americans than other western states. Black prostitutes faced discrimination on two fronts. Not only were these women prostitutes, but they were also Black.[68] Citizens found these women easy targets to racially discriminate against and to use for attempts at improving moral elements of their towns. In cattle towns, and the West, many African American women made the transition from slavery to prostitution.[69] For these women, they substituted one form of slavery for another and still faced discrimination. However, it should be noted that westerners did not refer to Black prostitutes as Black, but instead Mulatto. A list of prostitutes in Cheyenne, Wyoming in 1880, described African American brothels as All-Mulatto Houses. Westerners described Black prostitutes as Mulattos, and servants as Black.[70] By distinguishing between these two groups of women, westerners made Mulatto prostitutes appear a little more prestigious than Black servants. White men made this distinction because they preferred to call Black prostitutes something that made them seem a little less Black. The acceptance of Black prostitutes by White men shows how

[67] Rutter. *Upstairs Girls*, 5-6.
[68] Butler, *Daughters of Joy,* 5.
[69] Butler, *Daughters of Joy,* 13.
[70] MacKell, *Red Light Women,* 384-385.

westerners accepted the integration of African American women within this certain vice industry.

Similar to other prostitutes, African American women also faced violence in cattle towns. In a *Dodge City Times* article in December, 1886, the editor wrote,

> "A colored woman, an inmate of one of the dens on 3rd Avenue was shot in the thigh by a man named "Curley" on Tuesday morning. We understand that the frail female was enticing Curley into her place, when the latter fired. The woman was not expected to live at last account. Curley was placed in county jail. This is the same woman who was badly cut in the neck in a row last summer."[71]

Obviously the newspaper did not sympathize for the woman, and residents did not seem outraged that Curley shot her. To make the woman appear troublesome, the newspaper referred to a prior altercation involving the woman. The fact that the woman worked as a prostitute indicated to the moral citizens of Dodge City that the incident was, perhaps, the woman's own fault.

Kansas cattle town prostitutes suffered from violence and devastating disasters because of their occupation. While local newspapers and the community minimized the calamities that these women endured, they also depicted some events as tragic examples to close down the vice businesses in the community.

The editors of the *Wichita City Eagle* wrote numerous articles that described the treatment of prostitutes. In April of 1872, the paper ran an editorial about a woman named Mrs. Neiswender who lived near Topeka. Four women tarred, feathered, turpentined, and red peppered the woman because they believed their husbands "were led into devious ways through her attraction."[72] The editorial is very brief, but gives the impression that the community did not

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[71] Editorial, *Dodge City Times,* December 23, 1886.
[72] Editorial, *Wichita City Eagle,* April 19, 1872.

see the treatment of Mrs. Neiswender as an outrage. For a woman who enticed upstanding men into immoral actions, perhaps citizens thought her brutal treatment appropriate and just.

Another article concerning prostitutes appeared in the *Eagle* in July of 1872. This article explained that officials brought six maudlin dance house girls before the city judge on the charge of vagrancy. The editor says that further details would not be good to print in a family newspaper. However, he does declare that the six women committed outrages upon decency, and that decency needed to be maintained in the West.[73] Even though the paper reported few details about the women and their sins, the editor still attacked the women as prostitutes and as an immoral element to society that the town needed to address.

Citizens of cattle towns also felt little sympathy concerning violence that prostitutes committed against each other. The Dodge City Globe reported that two women who worked together at a dance hall, Bertha Lockwood and Sadie Hudson, quarreled over a man. When Sadie hit Bertha, Bertha stabbed Sadie in the chest.[74] The public said little over this matter between the two women because the fight occurred in one of the vice businesses. Similarly, the public did not feel sympathetic when Big Jennie, who worked as a prostitute, attempted suicide. An article in the Globe said, "Big Jennie made her monthly attempt at suicide last week, and failed as usual. She should be encouraged in her laudable efforts to make business for the new cemetery. Let her try nitroglycerine."[75] Victorian morality and ethics did not find suicide acceptable, but since Big Jennie worked as a prostitute, residents did not curtail her efforts. In fact, the town believed that Big Jennie's death was a worthy endeavor.

Many citizens of a cattle town did not want to engage with women who worked as prostitutes on a personal level. The doctor who delivered the first baby born in Dodge City said,

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[73] Editorial, *Wichita City Eagle,* July 19, 1872.
[74] Rutter, *Upstairs Girls,* 63.
[75] Haywood, *Victorian West,* 29.

"My God! I did something last night that I never thought is possible to fall to my lot, and I am so ashamed that I never will again practice in Dodge. I delivered an illegitimate child from a notorious woman, in a house of prostitution."[76] Wright, who wrote of the doctor's reaction, did not think that the event was a cause for frustration, but he determined that the doctor was very upset at being forced to have such personal contact with a woman who society considered to have an immoral reputation.

The local communities sometimes viewed prostitutes as sad, unfortunate people who they pitied. At races held in Wichita in 1872, two prostitutes became drunk on wine and started to argue with each other. Instead of stopping the argument, several hundred men surrounded the women and did not let anyone interfere in the argument. The argument turned into a fight, and by the end, the women had, "nothing left on them but shreds of their finery on soiled and wanton forms."[77] Instead of blaming the women for their behavior, the community also appeared to be saddened by the actions of the "few hundred" men who allowed the spectacle to take place. These men permitted a sexually-charged scene to take place in a public atmosphere within a society attempting to be Victorian. Society promoted the concept of manliness in the Victorian era. This concept described men as civilized people who upheld Victorian values. Society also saw white men as exhibiting the most manliness.[78] Manliness meant that men should be above such actions as those that took place at the races. "Moral" townspeople expected actions of the men at the contest to come from uncivilized races, but not from civilized, manly white men. The concept of manliness in the story of the races in Wichita links the ideas of morality and racial superiority that people held in Victorian society and Kansas cattle towns.

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[76] Wright, *Dodge City,* 165.
[77] Editorial, *Wichita City Eagle,* August 8, 1872.
[78] Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 26.

After the deaths of up to a dozen prostitutes in a 5th Avenue hotel fire in Wichita, the community felt sadness. The owners of the business saved themselves from the fire, but not the girls. Afterwards, they told the town that they hoped to reopen their business just a few days after the fire, despite the loss of life. The local benevolent societies in Wichita carried the expense for the women's burials. The disrespect that the owners showed for the women caused the townspeople to ask if society considered human life less valuable than making money. However, the newspaper article describing this event also stated that although unfortunate, the incident might force the townspeople to spend more money on building inspections and manual fire alarms.[79] Although saddened by the disrespect shown for the loss of so many lives, newspaper editors used the accident to promote town procedures that they thought should be put into effect. It is questionable whether the community felt alarm and sadness by the event, or if they saw the affair as an opportunity to promote some action by town leaders.

Residents in the early years of cattle towns accepted vice businesses, including prostitution, more than when a permanent citizenry stabilized. When the cattle towns began to resemble towns further east, the citizens worked hard within the realm of reform to contain the vice industries. Authorities employed more regulation and control of brothels in the East than those in Kansas cattle towns. Reform of the prostitution industry did not necessarily mean closing the institution in cattle towns, but bringing the industry under the control of those citizens who considered themselves moral. In the early years of Dodge City as a cattle town, Wright said, "More than occasionally some dark-eyed virago or some brazen-faced blonde with a modern sundown, will saunter in among roughs of the gambling houses and saloons, entering with inexplicable zest into the disgusting sport, breathing the immoral atmosphere with a gusto which

[79] Editorial, "The Cheapness of Life," *Wichita City Eagle,* January 2, 1873.

I defy modern writers to explain."[80] In the first few years of a town booming from the cattle industry, local authorities did not actively attack prostitutes for their business, because the women kept the cowboys amused. However, it did not take long for citizens to call for some restraints of the industry. *The Reporter* in Ellsworth in 1873 stated that, "If it cannot be routed out, the vicious vocation should be made to contribute to the expense of maintaining law and order."[81] The citizens in Ellsworth felt that prostitution and the other vice industries caused most of the criminal activity in the town, and therefore people within those professions should pay fines to support the local police force.

The payment of fines and fees by those in the vice industries was the first step in moral reform within the cattle towns. Citizens had already isolated the vice industries to separate sections of town in an early form of zoning, and then they forced those industries to pay extra money for conducting business within the town. The townspeople knew that they had to compromise their moral ideas with economic issues to keep the cattle industry within their towns. Therefore, even though residents tolerated vice industries, they put measures into place to limit the activity of prostitutes. Influenced by Victorian values, citizens of cattle towns associated true womanhood with virtue. Therefore they wished to restrict prostitution while promoting the industries and values of middle class families and women.[82]

Abilene restricted prostitution in a number of ways. After McCoy moved prostitutes in Abilene to their own area of the town, he also implemented a program in which women could go to the courthouse and pay all of their fines for a year.[83] This allowed for the town to receive the money that it wanted from the women, and saved the police officers from spending a lot of time

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[80] Wright, *Dodge City,* 140-141.
[81] Rutter, *Upstairs Girls,* 79.
[82] White, *Misfortune,* 308.
[83] Moore, *Cowboys and Cattlemen,* 189.

rounding up women to pay fines. The town also created town ordinances related to houses of ill fame. One ordinance in April of 1871 listed the amount of money that building owners, operators, and workers of brothels each paid to the city. The ordinance said that the general reputation of such establishments provided evidence of the character of any person associated with such a building.[84] Another ordinance, passed in June of the same year, stated that authorities considered any person hanging around a house of ill fame, or places that sold alcohol, and who possessed no visible means of support, as a vagrant. Officials forced vagrants to pay fines.[85] These ordinances tried to limit the influence of vice industries in Abilene without completely expelling them from the town. By establishing these ordinances, citizens not only appeared to be upholding moral standards, but also filled the town's treasury with money from fines. J.B. Edwards, who lived in Abilene, said that town council members allowed dance houses and such establishments to run for a while, until they became, "too dignified to allow them to stay open and ordered them closed."[86] Although this does not necessarily seem true, it is probable that many vice establishments closed in Abilene because the owners could not afford the fines placed on them by the city, and that they saw better opportunities in other cattle towns for their institutions.

Dodge City began to place restrictions on prostitutes in the 1880s. In 1881, authorities banned prostitutes from coming into saloons, did not allow new dance halls to open in town, and stated that one dance hall would close.[87] "Moral" citizens of Dodge City requested these limitations. An incident at the 1884 July 4th celebration in Dodge City showed how the citizens segregated prostitutes from themselves. At the celebration, officials allowed the women to be

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[84] Editorial, "An Ordinance: Relating to Houses of Ill Fame," *Abilene Chronicle,* May 18, 1871.
[85] Editorial, "Miscellaneous Ordinance," *Abilene Chronicle,* June 22, 1871.
[86] Edwards, *Abilene,* 8.
[87] Dykstra, *Cattle Towns,* 271.

present, but stated that they had to stand apart from the respectable women, and stay within their own group.[88] Once again, residents of a cattle town physically separated themselves from who they considered as less moral town occupants.

Through the examination of physical, racial, and moral segregation in Kansas cattle towns, I have shown the struggle of different groups of people to have their own place in a primarily white, "moral" society. African Americans and vice workers helped to support the economies of cattle towns while at the same time that "moralists" physically segregated them from society. Threats to morality allowed white citizens to attack African Americans and vice workers, but as long as the economy of these towns relied on the cattle industry, residents willingly withstood the threats to moral issues in order to preserve their economy. As the individual examples in this paper have shown, clear lines cannot always be drawn concerning the treatment of African Americans, vice industries, and women who worked as prostitutes in the Kansas cattle towns. The struggles exhibited by African Americans and women who worked as prostitutes in particular demonstrated the future of these two groups. Kansas continued to shape its values according to those developed in the East. As morality concerns strengthened in the eastern region of the United States, women working as prostitutes in Kansas would be pushed even further toward the edge of society. In the same manner, those same concerns of morality would also propel African Americans toward equality in the East and allow African Americans in Kansas to push for even more freedom and equality.

[88] Drago, *Wild, Wooly, and Wicked,* 308-309.

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